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KINDERGARTEN THEORY.

BERTHA PAYNE AND ANNE ELIZABETH ALLEN.

THE work for October has been a review of plays and games, with a view to finding the function in general of play. The traditional games were collected, examined, and compared with each other to find the aim or point of interest in each, and the essential elements in all. Froebel's games were compared with them. The results of the class work on this topic will be given in a later issue. During November children's toys, playthings, and their own inventions of a constructive nature will be studied.

The division of a child's activity into such classes as play, games, work, constructive play, or dramatic play is more or less artificial. Fundamentally all are one, and yet there are differences upon which we can make a rough classification that is a convenience in study. If these classifications are helpful at all, they must help one to see the demands made upon a child's body and mind by each characteristic form of activity; for if the demands are found to vary, and to vary greatly, an alternation in the forms of play or work will be found to be economy of energy, and also to keep up a balance of power and skill.

All play, all work, is self-realization; yet to realize one's idea through the work of the hand gives a specific training that can come only through that mode of expression. In the realization of the idea through dramatic action, the whole body becomes the instrument of thought in expression, and a certain freedom is gained that can come through no other mode.

The formal game which is a universal social exercise for children has still another function, based on a psychological difference of attitude. In the game form, rule, and unvarying repetition introduce an element of formality and observance of rule and order which the other modes do not give.

PLAYTHINGS.

1. Notice the favorite toys of the nursery.
2. Recall the contents of a toy shop.
3. Visit the Field Museum and find the historic toys.
4. See list of references given below for library work.

A rough grouping of the objects found in an ordinary list of toys yields, among other things, the following classes :

1. Toys that are made as miniature reproductions of objects used in adult life, either in the home, in the industries, or in any of the various processes that enter into our common daily living.

2. Toys that depend for charm upon an appeal to sense-perception in some striking way, as rattles, bells, whistles, balls, and other moving toys; likewise brightly colored playthings.

3. Things that can be taken apart and put together, and whose charm depends on this property of divisibility, such as dissected maps and pictures, puzzles, and building blocks.

4. Drawing and painting materials, pictures, slates and blackboards, stencils; and similar devices.

The entire list shows demands coming from children for specific qualities, among which are (1) strong contrasts; (2) objects with which their ideal world may be made real in (a) the completed thing, as doll or wagon; (b) the raw material, which may be changed to suit the idea, as in the case of paints or blocks.

The chance material which children find and use shows the same feeling for invention; and invention most often of some object around which may cluster observations or ideas of the world of people about them.

STAGES OF PLAY.

1. Play with objects to get full sensational value, and for sense of action and control.

2. Play with objects in their real uses.

3. Play with objects adapting them to new uses, combining construction or invention, or merely using the whole thing as a symbol or suggestion of some other thing.

Children use materials which lie in their way because they are both accessible and desirable. Desirability suggests a possible educational value for the attractive thing, whatever it may be. It is probable that, when we have found wherein lie the elements of attraction, we may find a substitute, furnishing the same general elements in a more usable form.

Froebel's gifts.—It was this plan of study and substitution that led Froebel to adopt his "gifts" and "occupations." They represent an attempt to work out a scheme of play materials that would improve upon chance by furnishing certain conditions.

The first two playthings, known as the first and second gifts, were designed for very young children, who are still hungry for sensations of sight, sound, and motion; who do not yet combine or build, but begin to see likenesses between things, and who establish a play activity upon a resemblance of form or function. The first gift consisted of six soft balls in the prismatic colors;

the second, of a ball, cube, and cylinder of hardwood. These are distinctly nursery playthings, and the majority of four-year old children in our kindergartens are already beyond the stage when these things offer novelty or suggestion for activity. It is the desire to cling to these things in logical order, long after their use is outgrown, that is responsible for much of the futile play in the kindergarten.

The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth gifts form a series of building blocks. In these Froebel's idea finds its most happy embodiment, for the children of kindergarten age, and on into the first and second grades. (1) They offer a material that can be adapted to many uses in construction. (2) As the idea grows and develops, the material responds to the growing needs; the number of parts increases; the variety of form grows. (3) There is no *fixity* about these gifts used day after day; the construction that suited yesterday can be improved upon today. (4) The division of the cubes into parts which are geometric solids lays a good basis for imagery needful in all thinking, in all measuring, and in all making. (5) The division of the cubes into multiples furnishes a continuous subconscious growth in the grasp of number, and a direct training in numerical combination and partition.

Today, as was Froebel's plan, all this formal, mathematical side stands merely as an appeal to sense-perception, and to inference, while the child is using his material to carry out his ideas in play. Number and form are emphasized only when necessary to the carrying out of his play.

READING IN THE THIRD GRADE.¹

GUDRUN THORNE-THOMSEN.

THE ideal life of a child in the primary school is one of great activity, activity directed toward educational ends. The child is all the time doing things. He is either producing something for the society in which he lives or investigating new phases of his environment, social or scientific. He is engaged in healthful out-of-door exercise, playing games, and singing; in short, he is following the laws of his being. He is given opportunities for using, and, therefore, for developing, his sense-organs to their fullest extent, for forming judgments and drawing inferences; and the power gained is used in actual doing.

If these premises are agreed upon, it does not seem difficult to assign to reading and to other language study their proper

¹ This reading lesson, in leaflet form, may be obtained in quantity from The University of Chicago Press.